

**States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions
First Preparatory Meeting for the First Review Conference
Geneva, 5 February 2015
EU Statement**

I am speaking on behalf of the European Union.

The following countries align themselves with this statement: the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Allow me first to thank Costa Rica and Croatia for presiding over this first preparatory meeting to discuss and prepare key substantial issues for the First Review Conference of States Parties to the Convention on Cluster Munitions. I also take this opportunity to thank Costa Rica for hosting the Fifth Meeting of States Parties and express our pride that the First Review Conference of the Convention will take place in an EU Member State, in Dubrovnik, Croatia, in September this year.

We would also like to thank both the President of the Fifth Meeting of States Parties and the President Designate of the Review Conference for the documents circulated to us to prepare for the Conference. We have taken note of them and we are confident that this preparatory meeting will contribute effectively to the review process. It will give the opportunity to States Parties to identify progress which has been made as well as remaining challenges in developing the Dubrovnik Action Plan and the post-review conference machinery.

Since its entry into force a significant number of States from every region of the world have ratified or acceded to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, including a wide variety of states with different political, economic and security perspectives. We expect a high level of participation of States at the First Review Conference.

We support the humanitarian goal of the Convention on Cluster Munitions Convention. We are deeply concerned about the use of cluster munitions against civilian populations in South Sudan last year and reports of alleged such use in Syria. We are also concerned about worrying reports in the context of the conflict on the territory of Ukraine. The EU calls upon all actors to refrain from using cluster munitions against civilians and to observe the principles of International Humanitarian Law.

In supporting the overall goal of the Convention, the European Union puts specific emphasis on the objectives of alleviating victims' suffering, providing socio-economic reintegration and enhancing local and regional capacities. Where possible, we recognize the value of the development of synergies in the implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and other humanitarian disarmament instruments, as applicable.

The European Union takes a comprehensive approach to mine action. In providing assistance for clearance operations and victim assistance we do not differentiate between the types of explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions remnants.

Complementing our humanitarian mine action, the EU promotes the integration and streamlining of mine action into broader cooperation and development policies in order to

ensure sustainable results. Humanitarian mine action can facilitate the development of economic opportunities thus contributing to the integration of communities, including through the removal of barriers on access for persons with disabilities.

In order to ensure adequate integration of mine action into bilateral cooperation, it is necessary that affected countries prioritise or sufficiently take on board mine action in its wider sense in their requests for general assistance, and that they make it a priority or a sub-priority in their national indicative programmes. In addition the cooperation with governments at national level, international and regional cooperation is essential to the success of work on the ground. Coordinated assistance by international actors can increase the impact of the different kinds of support that can be made available.

Since 2010, the European Union and its Member States have contributed more than 500 Million Euro to Mine Action across the globe, representing more than one third of the world's financial assistance to projects in the mine action area in its wider sense in heavily affected countries and areas of the world, thus making the European Union and its Member States the leading donor in this area. These significant contributions are paving the way for reconstruction and economic and social development.

Victim assistance is a core component of the European Union's Mine Action Strategy and we are committed to providing concrete and sustainable assistance to victims, their families and communities. The EU believes that the sustainability of victim assistance in the longer term requires that these efforts be integrated into broader disability policies. The EU particularly emphasises the importance of the full participation of survivors and their representative organisations in decision-making and policy-making on issues affecting them.

Our ultimate goal is to ensure their full participation in all spheres of society on an equal basis with others and in a sustainable way. This goal can be better achieved taking also into consideration the continued relevance of and synergy with other international instruments and norms. In this regard, we wish to underline the strong linkage with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which provides a wider framework to address comprehensively the needs of survivors, the realisation of their political, social and economic rights, and to ensure respect for their inherent dignity.

We are aware that full compliance with the obligations of the Convention on Cluster Munitions can be a significant challenge for affected States Parties. The European Union will continue to work in cooperation with the countries concerned. We need to join our efforts to develop constructive ideas and carry out concrete action to achieve our common goals with a particular focus on the support of the affected populations.

Thank you.